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Grade R – 12 and Vocational

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BULLYING POLICY

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PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy includes that prohibition of every form of bullying or harassment which occurs in the classroom or elsewhere on the school premises. Bullying or harassment which is initiated at a location that is not on the school premises is not covered by this policy. Orion College expects pupils to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other pupils and school staff.

INTRODUCTION

It is now widely accepted that bullying is prevalent in all schools; that it is extremely harmful to the health, well-being and academic progress of a substantial minority of students and, moreover, actions taken by the school and by parents can significantly reduce its occurrence.

Bullying, however, is a problem that is often overlooked or ignored, because teachers and parents are often not aware that it is going on, or, if they are aware of it, they do not know how to deal with it. The situation is made more difficult by the fact that children who are victims of bullying are afraid to report it for fear that things will get worse for them.

The situation becomes increasingly more difficult when adults hold the misplaced belief that if bullies are ignored they will stop bullying, or the view that it is an inevitable part of growing up that will pass without their intervention. There are even those who subscribe to the view that bullying is good for children and builds character.

Bullying, as research and experiences has shown, is something that cannot be ignored and should not be tolerated. The consequences for the bully and the person being bullied are far too serious.

To this end, we value our school community in which everybody feels respected and safe and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted. Everybody has a right to enjoy his/her time at school.

The Orion family will not tolerate bullying in any form!

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is actual hurtful behaviour directed by more powerful individuals or groups against those who are less powerful. It is typically repeated and often enjoyed by the bully or bullies, but never justified. It is experienced as oppression. The four criteria used to identify bullying are:

1. Hurtful
2. Deliberate
3. Persistent
4. Refusal to stop

Bullying comes in many forms, including:

- Deliberately kicking, punching, hitting and bumping
- Teasing, taunting, mocking, name calling
- Spreading rumours
- Picking on others
- Repeatedly “putting down” someone
- Deliberately ignoring, avoiding, excluding and isolating.
- Interfering with, taking, or damaging, another’s property.
- Using threatening gestures
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others.
- Making degrading comments about another’s religion, culture, family members or social background.
- Cyber bullying

TO PREVENT BULLYING

- Respect yourself and others
- Work to create a pleasant school environment for all.
- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.
- Learn to tolerate and accept individual differences
- Support the school policy against bullying.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BULLIED

- Tell the bully to stop
- Take courage. Seek help. Talk about it to someone you trust. (Teachers, Principals, Therapists or your peers).
- Report it to a member of staff, Therapist or a leader. The school does not tolerate bullying. Feel confident that any incident can be resolved satisfactorily. Once the incident has been reported to a staff member, he/she will assess if the complaint constitutes bullying, against the bullying criteria. Should the behaviour against you meet the criteria, (i.e. the behaviour is hurtful, deliberate and persistent and continues even after you tell the person to stop), an investigation will take place.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE IS BEING BULLIED

- Care enough to do something about it, whether it affects you personally or not.
- Early intervention can defuse a situation before it gets out of hand

- Report it to a member of staff, Therapist, prefect or monitor.

IF PROVEN YOU ARE THE BULLY

Depending of the severity:

- You will be removed from the bullying situation
- Your Class teacher/subject teacher/Therapist/Head of Department/Deputy Head/Head will be involved depending on the nature and severity of the incident(s).
- You will be required to make a decision regarding your future behaviour in the form of a contract, that you and your parents will sign.
- You may be asked to sign a **No Contact contract**.
- You may be involved in a mediation process.
- You may be asked to complete a social skills training programme with a Therapist.
- You will be dealt with according to the rules and transgression policy of Orion College.
- In serious cases, your enrolment at Orion College may be reviewed.

INVESTIGATING AND REPORTING BULLYING

- All investigations and reports will be treated with the strictest confidence. The issue will be dealt with delicately but very seriously.
- Teachers will write up a written report if the behaviour reported to him/her, or the behaviour observed by him/her meets the criteria for harassment and bullying (i.e. the behaviour is **hurtful, deliberate and persistent and continues even after the person has been told to stop**). The alleged offender may then be referred to the Head of Department/Deputy Head/Head for support and screening of the situation. The information describing the behaviour is shared by the Head of Department/Deputy Head/ Head with the alleged offender. The alleged offender is then asked to make a decision regarding his/her future behaviour and will be recorded. In each case, incidents will be investigated thoroughly, with all parties involved being able to express their views.
- Once the investigation has been completed, each case will be treated on merit. Where necessary, disciplinary procedures will be implemented.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Bullying is categorised as a major offence. Disciplinary measures outlined in the Enrolment form, listed under “Orion College Rules, transgressions and regulations” will be instituted if the alleged offender is found guilty. See Code of Conduct for learners (attached).

ORION RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING TO PARENTS

- Encourage your children to discuss bullying as much as possible. Read through this policy thoroughly with your children.
- Watch for signs of distress e.g. unwillingness to attend school, frequent apparent illness.
- Advise your child to follow the procedures outlined above.

- Do not encourage your child to retaliate.
- Contact the school if your child's effort to deal with bullying does not appear to be working. Let your child know that this is the appropriate action.

ALL REPORTED CASES OF BULLYING WILL BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY

IN CONCLUSION

Bullying is condoned as long as the silence surrounding it is accepted and if the misplaced belief by some adults is allowed to perpetuate. Speaking out is the greatest weapon we have against bullying. We trust that the whole school community will share the responsibility to eradicate bullying wherever and whenever it occurs.